

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

OMB-01 IGA-02 TRSE-00 IO-13 OES-06 EUR-12 EA-07 /103 W

----- 123922

R 300950Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 521

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2224

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, BG, IN

SUBJECT: FARAKKA TALKS OFF TO BAD START

REF: A) DACCA 2031

B) DACCA 2131

1. ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE THE PROSPECTS FOR REAL PROGRESS IN THE LONG-DELAYED INDIAN-BANGLADESHI TALKS ABOUT THE FARAKKA BARRAGE WHICH FINALLY BEGAN HERE THIS WEEK, THE ATMOSPHERE AT THE OPENING SESSIONS COULD HARDLY BE WORSE ACCORDING TO SOURCES ON THE BANGLADESH SIDE.

2. IN BRIEF EXCHANGE WITH AMBASSADOR AT A NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION YESTERDAY, FOREIGN SECRETARY DESCRIBED THE TALKS AS OFF TO A VERY BAD START. HE ILLUSTRATED THIS BY NOTING THAT, TO ASTONISHMENT OF BDG SIDE, INDIAN DELEGATION HAD REFUSED TO SPECIFY RATE OF INDIA'S CURRENT OFFTAKE. IF PURPOSE OF TALKS WAS TO EXCHANGE TECHNICAL INFORMATION, THIS SEEMED TO FOREIGN SECRETARY AN ELEMENTARY FACT TO BEGIN WITH.

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3. M. ASAFUDDOWLAH, CHAIRMAN OF THE WATER DEVELOPMENT

BOARD, TOOK A SIMILARLY DARK VIEW IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR AFTER FORMER'S RETURN THURSDAY EVENING FROM TAKING INDIAN REPRESENTATIVES TO KHULNA AREA. HE SAID INDIAN REPRESENTATIVES DURING TALKS SO FAR HAD COUNSELLED BDG "TO FACE REALITIES" AND HAD SPOKEN OF THE POSSIBILITY OF BDG "PERSUADING THEM TO MAKE MINOR CONCESSIONS", THE UNACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE, ASAFUDDOWLAH FELT, OF THE STRONG SPEAKING TO THE WEAK. HE SAID HE HAD CAUTIONED AJMANI THAT FARAKKA WAS PUTTING BANLGADESH IN DESPERATE SITUATION (ASAFUDDOWLAH SPOKE OF AN INEVITABLE MASS EXODUS OF POPULATION FROM THE AFFECTED AREAS IF CURRENT SITUATION CONTINUED) AND THAT "A CORNERED CAT IS A TIGER." HE SAID FIELD TRIP TO KHULNA HAD NOT GONE SMOOTHLY EITHER, WITH DISPUTE OVER RELIABILITY OF BDG'S SALINITY TESTING EQUIPMENT, AND THAT HE WAS THINKINGABF TRYING TO BREAK OFF TALKS IF ATMOSPHERE DID NOT CHANGE SOON.

4. ASAFUDDOWLAH SAID HE HAD JUST FINISHED A DOCUMENTARY FILM WHICH HE FELT MADE A DEVASTATING CASE FOR BANGLADESH AND WHICH WOULD SOON BE AVAILABLE FOR TV SHOWING IN U.S., U.K. AND EUROPE. HE SAID PRESIDENT SAYEM HAD BEEN SO STRUCK BY IT ON SEEING IT YESTERDAY THAT HE HAD ASKED TO SEE IHUAOIN TODAY.

5. BOTH FOREIGN SECRETARY AND ASAFUDDOWLAH WERE AT PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT BDG DELEGATION WAS UNDER STRONG INSTRUCTIONS TO BE CONCILIATORY. ASAFUDDOWLAH SAID PRESIDENT HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD TO FIND WAY TO HOLD NEGOTIATIONS TOGETHER AND SEE TO IT THAT THEY DID NOT FAIL.
BOSTER

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